

# Vibrio and Natural Water Safety in Virginia

Vibrios are naturally occurring bacteria in salt or brackish (mix of salt and fresh) water. The presence of Vibrios in water is not a sign of contamination by sewage or pollution. In Virginia, Vibrios may be found in the ocean, Chesapeake Bay, and rivers which empty into the bay or ocean.

Wound infections caused by Vibrios are uncommon in Virginia, but can be serious. Infections can occur when broken or irritated skin comes into contact with salt or brackish water, or when a wound occurs while in the water. Vibrios may also cause ear infections.

Fishing, boating, and swimming are all great ways to enjoy Virginia's natural waters!



## Protect yourself:

- If possible, stay out of the water if you have an open wound.
- If you must go in the water with a wound, cover it with a waterproof bandage.
- If a cut or wound is exposed to salt or brackish water, wash the affected area immediately with soap and clean water.
- Use antibiotic ointment as directed after the wound has been cleaned.
- If the wound shows signs of an infection, such as swelling or redness, see a healthcare provider immediately, and notify them of any water exposures.
- Wear protective equipment such as water shoes and gloves when handling raw shellfish or marine items.
- Be cautious when handling items such as fish hooks, crab pots, and fish with sharp spines, as they can cause wounds, increasing the risk of *Vibrio* infection.

Want more information? Visit the VDH waterborne hazards website at:  
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-epidemiology/waterborne-hazards-control-program/>